



Echoing Hills Connection





As I walked into work the other day, I noticed a handprint on the door. My first thought was to clean it; however, before I did, I thought of the people that leave their handprints on the organization everyday. Metaphorically, of course.

We have those we serve who are willing to share their talents. Whether art, music, writing, or another gift, individuals express themselves and allow us to be a part of that. Along with their families, they also share feedback. This feedback enables us to continue to grow and meet needs.

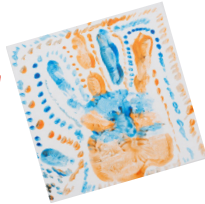
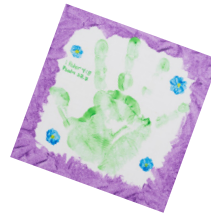
There are team members who come in every day, lovingly serving those we support. We even have those who come in on their days off in order to spend extra time with those who have become like family to them. Throughout this newsletter, you will find the actual handprints of team members that make a difference every single day! Volunteers and our board members also give their time helping Echoing Hills and those we serve in many ways.

Finally, I think of our gracious donors. People generous with the treasures the Lord has entrusted to them. Their gifts allow those we serve to experience camp, fund improvements to our programs, assist with large building campaigns, and so much more!

No matter what your relationship is to the organization, always remember your handprint BELONGS here. Much like handprints, each person part of this ministry is unique and beautifully created by Christ. Your touch allows us to continue to revolutionize lives!

President/CEO

Timothy D. Newell



Echoing Connections of Southeast Ohio Gets a Makeover!

Echoing Connections of Southeast Ohio has served individuals since 2011. Before opening their doors, a flooring store and warehouse occupied the space. To display options, the company laid multiple flooring surfaces throughout the building.

"I always enjoyed the uniqueness of the flooring; however, it was sometimes difficult for the individuals we serve," shares Director of Adult Services Rachel Ulbrich. "Some had trouble navigating their wheelchairs over the different textures, while others having difficulty with depth perception could be unsure of their footing."

At the beginning of this year, that all changed. Echoing Connections received all new flooring with the help of a donor gift. In addition, they rearranged their computer area, added recliners, and reorganized. Those that utilize and work at the program couldn't be happier.

"It is so refreshing to walk into our building now," Rachel says. "I have always loved our space; however, now it feels bigger and fresher. I have noticed more confidence in some of those we serve with getting around the building easier. It is a great way to start 2023!"

"Oh, I love it! It is beautiful!" – Sarina W.

"I like the new computer area." – Ethan C.

"I like it. It is pretty!" – Bonnie L.



Lee – Joyful and Consistent Belongs in Teaching and Learning

Lee is a Classroom Coordinator at EchoingU of Southwest Ohio. He has been with the program for several months; however, he has worked at Echoing Hills since September 2020. For him, this job is where he belongs.

"I began working as a Maintenance Assistant for Echoing Hills," shares Lee. "I worked at all Southwest locations, including Echoing Woods, Echoing Valley, and Echoing Connections. There was something about EchoingU, though; I felt called here."

As a Classroom Coordinator, Lee enjoys taking students out into the community. It is an opportunity to learn and explore while engaging with others. These outings, which have included things such as the library, shopping, and a recent visit to a train display, allow students to learn about the world around them.

When asked what three words Lee would use to describe his role, he shares teach, share, and learn.

"I feel like I learn from the students before I teach them anything," Lee says. "They teach me how they handle situations with their abilities. I can then teach other students these same skills. It's a great experience!"

For Lee, the students are his favorite part of the job; however, he also considers Echoing Hills a calling to which he belongs.

"I have two grown children, Anthony and Destiny, that have disabilities," shares Lee. "This job helps both their development and mine. What I learn at work, I can take home to them. What I learn at home, I can bring to work."

When not working at EchoingU, you can find Lee repairing and fixing things.

"The Lord blessed me with mechanical aptitude," says Lee. "I feel blessed to share these gifts with others."



Eli – An Expressive Artist Creativity Unleashes Communication

When Eli was young, he had trouble expressing himself. That was until he discovered drawing, which opened up a new world.

"I had a hard time sharing how I felt," says Eli. "Drawing helped me to get my feelings out."

Eli initially started by tracing over objects. Today, you can find him free-hand drawing animals, cars, cartoons, and anything that strikes him. He typically draws in pencil; however, occasionally, he will use color in his drawings too.

Entering art contests through Art and Soul and creating art for a church's Vacation Bible School last summer, Eli enjoys sharing his artwork with others.

"Our theme for Vacation Bible School was Zoomerang," shares Pauletta Wessell, Habilitation Coordinator at EchoingU of Southwest Ohio. "I showed him some ideas but gave him creative license to create whatever he would like. We were all so impressed with the finished product!"

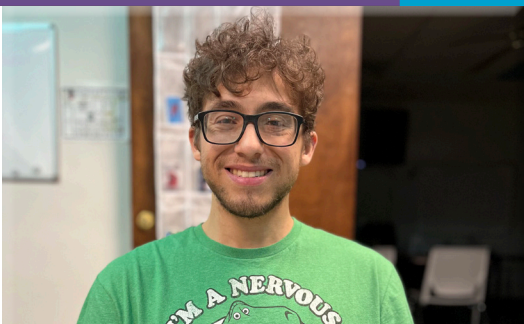
What advice does Eli have for others trying to get into drawing?

"Just start. Use your five senses to guide you," Eli says. "Do your best, and most importantly, have fun with it!"

When not drawing, you can find Eli listening to music, studying (his favorite subjects are writing, math, and history), and writing. Eli also enjoys his job at the University of Dayton.

"I work in the dining department," Eli shares. "I am a hard worker, and I enjoy it."

For other individuals with disabilities, Eli shares this, "Sometimes you may not feel good enough. I know I've been there. Don't give up! Keep going after your interests."



Attention All Campers and Counselors!

Summer camp will run from June 11 – August 4. Weeks are designed and set up for different ages and support needs. In addition, there is a two-week camp and time for siblings to join too.

Visit ehvi.org/recreation to learn more and to register today!



We Are Going To Disney!

Camp Echoing Hills will be heading to Florida from May 22 – May 26 and August 7 – August 11. While there, we will visit the different Disney parks.

Visit ehvi.org/recreation-2/travel-program to learn more and to access the travel application!

Camp Echoing Hills Spotlight – Meet Derek Camp Provides Friendship and Independence

Derek lives in New Albany, Ohio, along with his mom, Denise, and their three cats. If you ask him what he enjoys, he immediately shares things that are meaningful to him. There's football (especially the Pittsburgh Steelers), going out to dinner, his book club, and visiting his sister and six-year-old niece in Pickerington, Ohio. Another thing at the top of that list is Camp Echoing Hills.

First attending camp a few years ago, Derek immediately knew this was the place for him. He felt welcomed and enjoyed all of the camp activities. Activities that have only increased since that first visit.

"I have always enjoyed fishing, crafts, and hayrides," Derek shares. "This past summer, I enjoyed new things like axe throwing and side-by-side rides. My favorite activity, however, has to be kangaroo court! It's always a lot of fun with a lot of laughs."

Another thing Derek enjoys about camp is the relationships he has formed with both staff and other campers.

"I love the friendships I build based on a Christian foundation."

What started as a week at camp in the summer has evolved into enjoying regular respite weekends too. Derek has liked his weekend adventures to COSI, church, and a weekend in Pittsburgh.

While Derek is away, Denise, enjoys her time at home.



"It's funny because I always feel lost at first like I should be doing something," shares Denise. "But it's nice to have alone time to go shopping or to read a book."

Denise is grateful for what camp has done for her and her son.

"I am thankful for this opportunity which allows Derek to be independent of me. I can enjoy my quiet time knowing he is safe, making new friends, and having fun. He always comes home ready for his next respite weekend or week at summer camp."

Derek agrees, "It is nice to be away from home and in the country. I enjoy the quiet time camp provides."

Gordon's Gift

A Newsletter Column featuring Gordon's short stories leaving us with a gift of life's lessons.

Gordon has lived at Echoing Hills Community Living of Central Ohio for many years.

"The Treasure"

Once upon a time, there was a young man name Logan. Logan knew of a very wise sage named Gordon. It was said that Gordon the sage knew of a great treasure. Logan went to see Gordon to see if he could give him the location of the treasure.

Gordon said that he would give Logan the location of the treasure. Gordon and Logan spent the afternoon preparing a large amount of food. After they had prepared the food, they put it into Gordon's car and drove away.



Gordon drove them to a run-down section of town. They stepped in front of an old building. They took the food out of the car and went into the building. Inside the building were about 50 shabbily dressed children. "Where are we," asked Logan. "We are at a shelter for homeless children," said Gordon. "Their parents don't have enough money to care for them."

Gordon and Logan spread the food on a table, and the children came up and helped themselves to all the food.

After they had finished eating, the children came up one by one and thanked Logan for what he had done for them. Logan had never felt happier in his life. Gordon smiled and calmly explained to Logan that he had found the treasure. It was then that Logan realized that the true treasure was not material wealth like gold and silver and precious stones. He realized that true treasure was happiness that came from helping others.

As Logan left the building with Gordon, the sage, he realized he had learned more than the meaning of true treasure. Logan realized he had learned the secret to life itself!



The Struggle is Real

While missions may vary, all developmental disabilities service providers face the same challenges. Today, our field cannot hire enough staff to care for the individuals it serves. To say we have reached a staffing 'crisis' is a gross misrepresentation of the current situation.

Over thirty percent of our direct service workforce comprises employees with less than six months' experience. These employees must learn the unique needs of those we serve through a consistent presence. As with any relationship, understanding the extraordinary qualities that make that person who they are takes time—special dietary needs, simple likes and dislikes of food and texture preferences, activities, and other daily experiences. When employees revolve in and out of their lives, it makes for a very unstable environment and a concern for quality care.

Even this limited amount of stability would not be possible without the recent investment made by Echoing Hills to increase direct support staff wages. In May of 2022, using savings and other one-time dollars, Echoing Hills increased wages by \$2.50 per hour to reach an average starting wage of \$16.50 per hour. But this decision, made out of absolute necessity, is only sustainable with a state budget increase. While the long-term viability of Developmental Disability Providers is troubling enough, it is compounded by the stories of unmet needs.

Echoing Hills is perhaps best known for its summer camp for individuals with developmental disabilities. Since 1967, our campers have come from every part of Ohio. While this week is fun for our campers, it also serves as a needed respite for parents – a time for them to take a mental health break, and recharge. In a typical summer, Camp Echoing Hills serves 350 campers. Unfortunately, this past summer, because we could not recruit enough staff and could not guarantee the health and safety of campers, we had over 100 campers on our waitlist for summer camp. In addition, we had to cancel around 60 reservations, which meant we had to tell campers and their families we had already said yes to that they could not come to camp.

Echoing Hills also provides residential services, a home for people with developmental disabilities. It is devastating that we have had to discharge individuals with complex needs and behaviors, as have other providers because we didn't have the staff to care for them.

Echoing Hills is advocating to the Governor and his Administration to help solve this workforce crisis in the developmental disabilities field. While our field is not the only industry facing a staffing crisis, it is one place where the action of the Governor of Ohio can make a substantial difference. Medicaid almost exclusively supports those we serve with virtually no private pay or private commercial insurance to offset operating losses. This means the Administration's decision to raise ICF and Waiver rates will allow providers to pay their direct support staff more and dramatically improve our ability to serve Ohioans with developmental disabilities.

Our goal is to educate and inform as many as possible as we work to solve this crisis and ensure that all Ohioans with developmental disabilities receive the care and support they need to live their best lives. Please reach out to your local and regional administration to advocate for these efforts!

Not Enough Helping Hands!



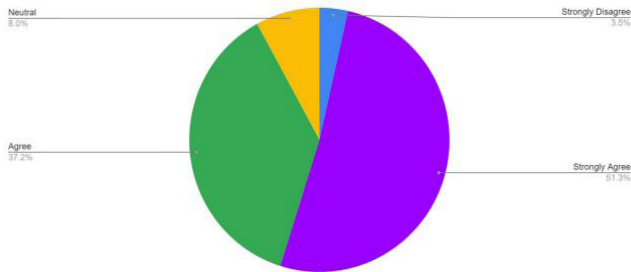


At Echoing Hills, our mission is to revolutionize lives where people live, learn, connect, play, and worship. To ensure we are doing this, we listen and learn from those we serve and their families. We value their voices and look forward to hearing what is being done well and what can improve.

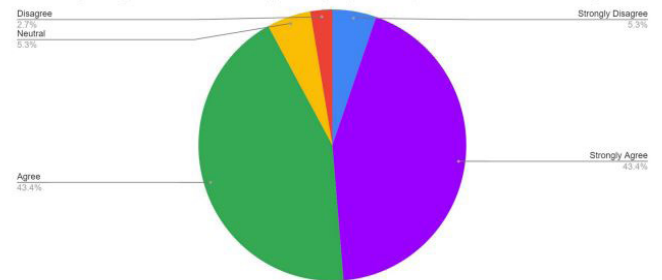
Echoing Hills Village, Inc.

Satisfaction Survey November 2022

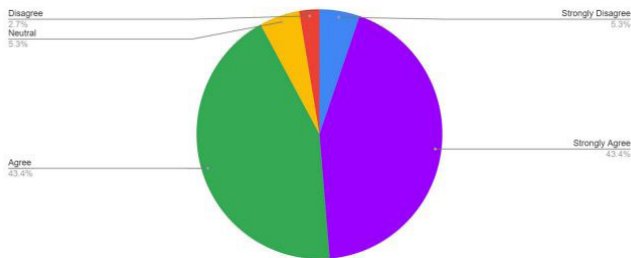
Echoing Hills staff are kind and patient when working with me / my family member.



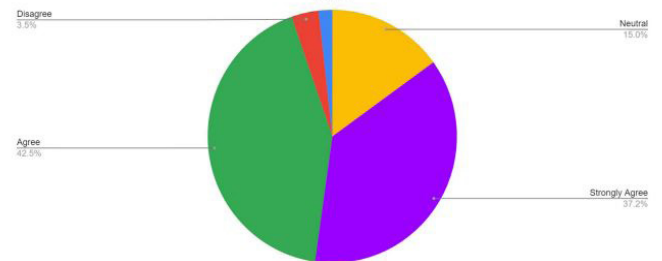
Echoing Hills gives Individuals the opportunity to plan and pursue their own vision and goals.



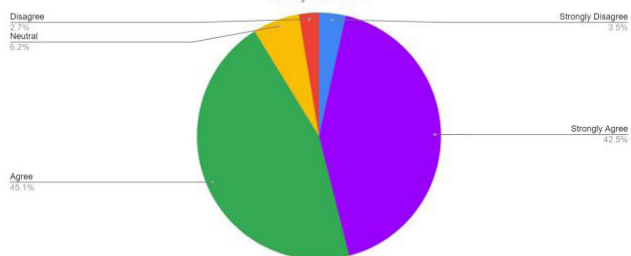
Echoing Hills staff are responsive to requests, questions, or concerns expressed by me / my family member.



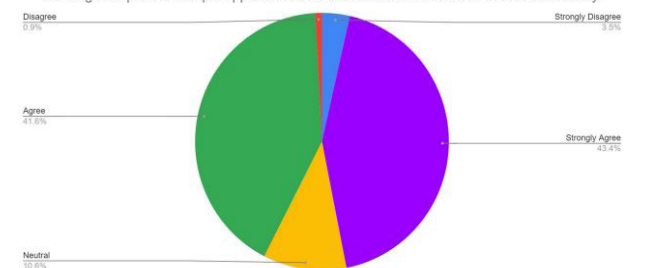
Echoing Hills staff knows what is important to me / my family member and help me achieve my goals.



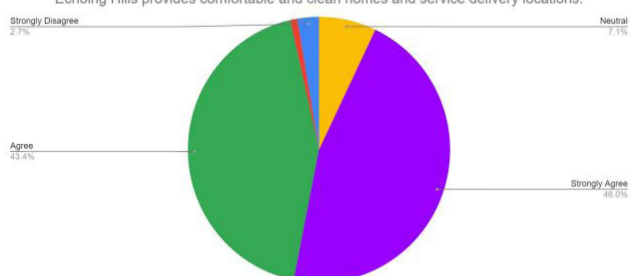
The Echoing Hills staff are supportive and provide services to meet my needs / needs of my family member.



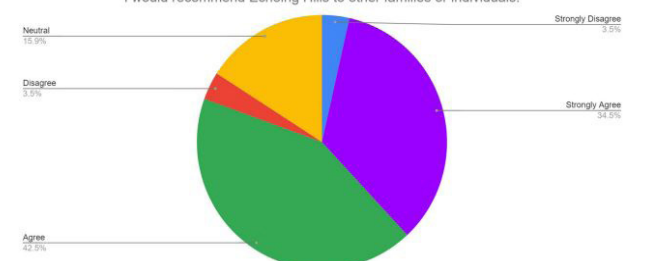
Echoing Hills provides ample opportunities for individuals to be involved in their community.



Echoing Hills provides comfortable and clean homes and service delivery locations.



I would recommend Echoing Hills to other families or individuals.



Fundraising Focus

Community Integration Project

Echoing Hills Northeast Ohio Community Integration Project:

2022/2023 Project Overview:

- 28 individuals served will move into five smaller six-person homes
- 3 New Home Builds in Canal Fulton
- 2 Homes Renovated in Canal Fulton

Total Project Cost: \$5.9 Million

Why Support this Project?

"Living in the smaller home, Randy is making his own decisions. He spends time the way he wants to. If he wants to be in his room reading his talking books, he does. This home gives him the freedom he didn't have in the larger home. We say Randy has a family there – two brothers and three sisters. It's like living with your best friends. They eat together and support one another.

I ask and encourage you to support Echoing Hills in the Community Integration Project. We have first-hand experience seeing the benefits of moving into the smaller home where his quality of life has been increased tremendously in a home-like atmosphere."
– Kirk Reid, Father



Our Faithful Friends' Gifts at Work!

We could not touch the lives that we do without YOU!
Together – we are inspiring hope and celebrating life!



Camp Multi-Purpose Building Improvements ~ Camper Scholarships



PAVING PROJECT





NEW
TRANSIT
VAN



SWING
PROJECT



EVENTS

OUTINGS



A charitable gift annuity is a contract involving you and a charity. You make a gift to the charity in exchange for fixed payments for the life of one or two persons. After all payments are completed, the charity receives a gift. A gift annuity funded during life provides you with a charitable income tax deduction and partly tax-free income.

Together – we are inspiring hope and celebrating life for the hundreds of people we serve.



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Recreation